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Sam A. Mustafa, *Napoleon's Paper Kingdom: The Life and Death of the Kingdom of Westphalia, 1807-1813*. London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017. xxi+341 pp. Maps, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$99.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-5381-0829-1; \$94.00 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-1-5381-0831-4.

Review by Nicola P. Todorov, University of French Guiana.

In 1903, the great historian Herbert A. L. Fisher described illiterate rustics in a Hessian village puzzled by the new Westphalian administration's bureaucratic demands, concluding that "The old-fashioned folk looked on all these busy doings with great disdain." [1] Such descriptions might have been one source of inspiration for the title Sam A. Mustafa gave to his book *Napoleon's Paper Kingdom: The Life and Death of Westphalia, 1807-1813*. The other might have been the huge number of archival files that, seemingly, impressed him when visiting several, mostly German, archives. "Empires have risen and fallen with less of a paper trail," he contends, "than that left behind by the Kingdom of Westphalia" (p. 314). Indeed, the short-lived states, like this satellite kingdom modeled on Napoleonic France, implemented in the territories conquered by Napoleon at the beginning of the nineteenth century in many parts of Europe, left behind them an archival record that appears a bit exotic in present-day non-French archives.

In his historiographical preface, Mustafa argues that scholars writing under the German Empire at the end of the nineteenth century had agreed that the Westphalian regime's supposed collapse matched the expectations of Prussian "liberators" (p. 286). The presumed revision of this old nationalist view from the 1970s onwards, initiated in Western Germany, was due to the desire to strengthen the Franco-German friendship, downplaying the oppression Napoleonic rule had represented for the people. Suspecting postwar historians to have "overcorrected," Mustafa attempts to challenge this view, stating that "Old stories ... are not necessarily wrong only because they are old" (p. xix).

The author admits having written an old-fashioned narrative history aimed at being lively and readable, dealing with individuals without necessarily categorizing them. His purpose, he claims, was to contextualize these individual actors and to examine to what extent they understood what was happening around them, while placing Westphalia into the larger context of the Napoleonic Wars. But he also aimed at writing a comprehensive history of the satellite kingdom, given that the abundant recent literature on the topic is either thematically or regionally restricted in scope. To the end, Sam A. Mustafa has divided his book into thirteen chapters that cleverly alternate between chronological and thematic sequences.

The first chapter is devoted to an account of the occupation of provinces later welded together into the Kingdom of Westphalia and to descriptions of life during this period of the war between France and the Fourth Coalition (from October 1806 until July 1807). Chapter two, entitled “A Kingdom on Paper,” deals with the kingdom’s organization, giving a brief description of its institutions and administrative divisions, the rational character of which the author attempts to refute. Taking up the idea of a state designed on paper and modeled on foreign country’s administration without any consideration to local resources, disseminated by the older historiography, he concludes that Westphalia was simply over-governed, its administrative staff being too replete given the size of the country and the number of its inhabitants. Mustafa analyses the motivations of those who served the new state, concluding that most were mainly driven by the desire to keep their jobs. He underlines the abundant contemporary literature about the new state and its legislation, showing the new state’s need to legitimize itself. As many historians before him, he tackles Napoleon’s domanical policy as one reason for Westphalia’s financial difficulties. Napoleon required the new state to cede a substantial part of all crownland laying in Westphalia to give it as fiefs to his officers. Chapter three describes Napoleon’s brother Jerome as the least ambitious of all his siblings, who rightly received his lasting reputation as a womanizer living an extravagant lifestyle at his court. But, as Mustapha believes, it was less the court’s expensive splendor and Jerome’s lack of interest in governing that discredited his regime than the burden of Napoleon’s excessive demands of troops and money that prevented the Westphalian state from winning popular support and loyalty.

The following thematic chapters are devoted to economic life and taxation, the army and military conscription, and, finally, the new legislation and the police. The author repeats several commonplaces created by the older literature. Heavy taxes rested upon the people, economic life was gloomy because of the continental blockade and this was, he claims, a continent-wide problem. Only a few people understood the new laws, and there were not enough judges who could read French and hence be able to understand the Civil Code. Of course, families hated conscription and compulsory military service, as they did elsewhere. Westphalia’s army was thus weakened by significant rates of desertion. In chapter seven, Mustafa describes the conspiracies that sought to overthrow the kingdom in 1809, just before and during Napoleon’s war against Austria, and he contends that they showed the new polity’s fragility. Chapters eight, nine, and ten deal with reforms in religious policy, the emergence of a new Westphalian identity, and attitudes towards the new regime. The final sequence is devoted to the alleged collapse of Westphalia and the restoration of the old order. All that remained of Westphalia was paper.

There is no doubt that the author argues that the old nineteenth-century story written by German historians is finally what matches best a scholarly (and evidence-based) reconstruction of Westphalia’s history. According to the author, recent German and French scholarship has not only overlooked the miseries under Napoleon’s rule, but also exaggerated the modernization of society and of the so-called model state. It is debatable whether historians have sanitized the unpleasant aspects of Napoleonic domination for political reasons. They simply opened their research to new fields that had been previously neglected. One might recall that the German historian Helmut Berding has insisted that the alleged failure of Napoleon’s reform policy occurred because the military and financial pressures exerted by the emperor compromised all efforts to win the people’s support.<sup>[2]</sup> Berding did not question the existence of what Mustafa calls a “plunder state” disseminated by the old nationalist historiography (pp. 73-74). However, more recent research has offered more nuanced views of this issue.<sup>[3]</sup> Challenging recent views on Westphalia’s life would require exploring large amounts of primary sources and analyzing

them according to scholarly standards of the twenty-first century. It would involve a serious discussion of recent research, especially given that the author's project was ambitious enough to deal with Westphalia in its entirety. Does Mustafa match these requirements?

Those who are a bit familiar with the satellite kingdom's history will be astonished by the incredible number of factual errors in Mustafa's book. Kassel, the capital, was not Westphalia's largest city, in contrast to Mustafa's repeated assertions. Despite growing from 18,450 people in 1807 to 22,803 in 1812, mainly due to the prosperity induced by its function as capital of a much larger state than the former Hessian electorate and not only because of immigration from France, Kassel remained only the third most populous city in the kingdom after Braunschweig (with a population of 31,714 in 1807) and Magdeburg (about 30,000).<sup>[4]</sup> It is quite clear that the French garrison of Magdeburg was never "as large as the city's population" (p. 209), as the author claims, and the number of soldiers stationed there rarely exceeded 7000-8000. Historians used to recognize the famous French jurist's Siméon sincere aim to deliver the peasants from feudal obligations. He kept the portfolios of the Ministries of the Interior and Justice up to the end of 1808 and then left the Ministry of the Interior to Wolfradt. However, according to Mustafa, Wolfradt was the Minister of Justice and Simeon that of Interior (p. 42, p. 131) throughout the whole reign of Jerome. According to a statement ascribed to Napoleon, Westphalians were not citizens but only subjects. Therefore, the word citizen was systematically avoided in official texts, as the author asserts repeatedly. However, these claims can be easily refuted by reading the text of the Westphalian Constitution, which uses both terms interchangeably.

Mustafa has not really understood Westphalia's administrative hierarchy. Confusing the canton mayors—a specific Westphalian rank created at the end of 1808—with the sub-prefects, he asserts that each district was governed by a certain number of sub-prefects (up to eight in certain cases). Like in France, every district was administered by one sub-prefect. The great number of communes administered by non-professional mayors, who often came from the peasantry and accepted relatively easily administrative tasks, shows the broad and interested involvement of the people in public local administration, rather than over-government.

Mustafa's description of the demesne policy, beginning with a wrong definition of what a domain was, confuses the uninformed reader. In the 1970s, scholars claimed that by depriving the Westphalian government of a substantial part of its crownland, Napoleon favored maintaining feudalism in these parts of the kingdom. However, he had declared that Westphalia should be a model of modernity for the other German states of the Rhenish Confederation, among other things, by abolishing serfdom and privileges. The owners of these domains, composed of the manors whose lord was the prince, were the Landgrave of Hesse, the Duke of Braunschweig, and the King of Prussia. For all reductions of these estates' revenues by Westphalian anti-seigniorial legislation, the Westphalian government had to compensate the recipients. Repeatedly, Mustafa describes these estates as private or aristocratic property confiscated by Napoleon (p. 46)! According to Mustafa, the aristocrats who feared confiscations of their lands, sent delegations to the emperor in 1807, since Napoleon's administrators were about to survey all these aristocratic properties (p. 29). Napoleonic administrators did indeed describe all the provinces before organizing the new kingdom, but they surveyed the domanial land of the former princes, never confiscating aristocratic and commoners' properties, considered as private property by the Civil Code. Private property was normally confiscated only in cases of civil servants and military officers who passed to the enemy (or betrayed the Westphalian state). Such confiscations were relatively rare. What the aristocratic delegates sent to Napoleon in 1807 feared was the complete

abolition of the peasants' seignorial obligations, as this had been done in France in 1794. The princely estates were run by farmers who were mostly agrarian pre-capitalist entrepreneurs and who saw their contracts confirmed; they continued to exploit these estates on behalf of the new French remote owners and were not expelled, as the author contends (p. 29). However, they had to pay the ground tax levied on the ground's revenue.

To show how the new system puzzled many Germans, Mustafa quotes a German author who published a detailed survey of Westphalian territories and who "got a bit confused over the difference between a department and a district" (p. 43). The cited author did not write on the new territorial division at all, but simply presented the statistics of the provinces integrated into the new kingdom.<sup>[5]</sup> These are only a few examples showing that the meticulous reader will have some difficulty finding confirmation of what the author claims in the works cited in the endnotes. Moreover, Mustafa rounds up figures provided by primary sources very roughly to make it look like Westphalia's balance sheet worse than it actually was. For example, Mustafa says that even the last Westphalian Minister of Finance, Malchus, conceded "that Westphalia's tax burden was at least 50% higher than that of the predecessor states, even without counting the forced bonds, special war taxes and French contributions" (p. 101). An analysis of the former minister's post-Napoleonic justifications reveals that Malchus acknowledged an increase of less than 44 percent and finally only around 30 percent, once the taxes imposed on the former privileged aristocrats were deducted and the old pre-Westphalian taxes suppressed in 1811 were taken into account.<sup>[6]</sup> This increase did not affect all social classes equally.

The numerous scans of archival files uploaded by the Hessian Archives allow us to verify Mustafa's high estimates for desertion.<sup>[7]</sup> He contends that the different police organs caught between 150 and 200 deserters per month or between 1800 and 2400 a year. The cited source file contains sixteen monthly accounts of gratifications paid to those who had caught draft dodgers or deserters for the districts of the Werra department. When counting the deserters and not mixing up them with the draft dodgers, as Mustafa clearly does, there were 29 deserters in the whole Werra department caught in 1811. If we assume that the evidence is incomplete, which is not certain at all, because gratifications could be paid irregularly, an extrapolation of the average numbers would lead to an estimate of 520 to 590 deserters caught in the whole kingdom in 1811, or 1,7% of the army's size. This would figure with the data published by the regime's press, which Mustafa attempts to question. But desertion varied regionally. The two lists available for the Fulda department, both of which are not accounts of gratifications, contain more arrested deserters: 28 in April 1811 and 14 in June. But since deserters were likely to desert when their units stood near to their homes—three quarters of the caught deserters came from the Fulda department that garrisoned half the Westphalian troops—these desertion rates are hardly generalizable. That only two lists are available might be due to incomplete preservation, or it might reflect periodical men-hunting practices known in other satellite states. Draft dodging like desertion were forms of resistance to conscription in Napoleonic France and elsewhere. But normally, historians relate the numbers of draft dodgers to the number of young men in the age-groups liable to military service. Compared to other Napoleonic armies, there was relatively little desertion and draft-dodging in Westphalia, which is not astonishing given the highly militarized societies in which people had lived before. The troops standing in the predecessor states amounted to at least 42,000 soldiers, a number the Westphalian army never reached, and the country was able to supply the French troops standing in the kingdom. The Westphalian army's losses have been exaggerated.

Neither the predicted “broadly-based rebellion” in the case of a war against Russia nor the collapse of Westphalia expected by Prussian strategists happened (p. 238). Westphalia was simply occupied by the regular forces of the Sixth Coalition victorious at Leipzig. Even before, deprived of the main part of its troops and engaged at the Saxon theater of operation alongside Napoleon’s *Grande Armée*, the kingdom was unable to prevent the enemy’s systematic incursions aimed at disorganizing its administrations. After these short incursions, Westphalian authority was immediately restored, and the alleged collapse of Westphalia expresses nothing more than the wishful and teleological thinking of nationalist historians. During the nearly four weeks between the “dissolution” of Westphalia on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1813 by the Russians (p. 286), who briefly occupied Kassel, and the week after the Battle of Leipzig, 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1813, and even beyond, the Westphalian administration continued to work as normally as possible in a context of military threat. The idea of widespread popular reprisals against Westphalian officials after the withdrawal of Napoleonic troops is illustrated by some cases that are largely exaggerated by the older historiography, and it is not based on carefully studied evidence. In the former duchy of Braunschweig, these incidents were mostly no more than charivaris, and they affected a little bit more than 6 percent of the villages and towns.[8] Mustafa is obliged to acknowledge that most Westphalian mayors remained in place. In North-western Westphalia, officials and inhabitants hesitated to side openly Napoleon’s enemies as long the scope of his defeat at Leipzig was not clear.[9]

In contrast to his declared purpose, Mustafa categorizes people. For instance, he stresses rightly the aristocrats’ hostility to the regime but does not apply his categorization to approach their writings critically. But above all, and without the slightest discussion, Mustafa uses national categories the relevance of which for the early nineteenth century has been largely questioned by recent scholarship.[10] What did it mean for the popular classes to be a German at that time? Beyond these weaknesses Mustafa’s work reveals some methodological limitations characteristic of many other histories of Napoleon’s satellites. Many historians specializing in these polities study exclusively the archival records of these short-lived administrations, leaving aside the huge mass of archival files left by the previous bureaucracies. When Prussia imposed her administration on the Polish provinces occupied after the last partitions (1795), the Poles perceived the new bureaucratic rules as petty. Their reactions resembled those of the Hessians, whose disdain for the Westphalian bureaucracy is described at the beginning of this review: “Most Poles reacted badly to a civil service that overwhelmed them with an avalanche of rules and regulations. Many of these created an impression of absurd pettiness.”[11] But it was this kind of administration that Napoleon’s men found in many parts of Westphalia. Bureaucratic tasks imposed on villagers were nothing new. And if Sam A. Mustafa had studied seriously these pre-Westphalian files, he would have found lists of Prussian deserters and draft dodgers whose properties were confiscated. Even if this is not always an easy task, measuring the rejection of Prussian and Westphalian military service in a comparative perspective would have allowed him to conclude that the Prussian military system was so much hated that in 1813 and 1814 Prussia’s occupational authorities felt obliged to justify the lacking will to enroll in the *Landwehr* by the fear of corporal punishments. The same criticism applies to the author’s impression of a strange hybridization of the German language with French words during the Westphalian period. The German language had much more French words than today, and they were largely imported in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and not under Napoleon’s rule. Some acquaintance with pre-Napoleonic German texts and familiarity with language history would have allowed the author to avoid such hasty conclusions.

It matters little that the author does not mention some works published in 2015 and 2016. [12] He had decided to avoid seriously engaging with most of the recent scholarly literature, instead using largely memoirs written in the nineteenth century as evidence to depict public opinion in Westphalia. Above all, he has systematically selected only those facts in both the old and new scholarly literature that support his theory of Westphalia's complete failure. It is easy to complicate and even to refute many of Mustafa's geographically and socially unnuanced assertions about the impact of the continental blockade, the effects of quartering troops, and many other aspects with information taken from the same scholarly literature he cites in his own bibliography. For example, in Willy Kohl's scholarly work, courageously published in the unfavorable context of Nazi Germany, he would have found that in 1817 peasants confessed "guilelessly" to a Prussian minister making a tour throughout the reoccupied province of Magdeburg that "they would like to have such a constitution back" (the Westphalian one). [13]

The numerous factual errors, the shallow reading of sources, the miscalculations obviously aimed at supporting his negative view of Westphalia, the very partial selection of facts, and the many unreliable references to the sources and the secondary literature disqualify Mustafa's book as scholarly work. Unfortunately, the English-speaking reader will still be advised to refer to the old works of Herbert Fisher and Owen Connelly, that certainly do not take account of recent research, but provide a much more well-balanced judgement on Napoleonic Westphalia and certainly contain fewer factual errors than Sam Mustafa's polemical writing. [14]

#### NOTES

[1] Herbert A. L. Fisher, *Studies in Napoleonic Statesmanship. Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), p. 271.

[2] For a summary in French: Helmut Berding, "Les dotations impériales dans le Royaume de Westphalie," *Revue de l'Institut Napoléon*, 192 (1976): 91-101.

[3] See, for example: Maike Bartsch, ed., *König Lustik!? Jérôme Bonaparte und der Modellstaat Königreich Westphalen* (Munich: Hirmer, 2008); Gerd Dethlefs, Armin Owzar, and Gisela Weiss, eds., *Modell und Wirklichkeit Politik, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Großherzogtum Berg und im Königreich Westphalen 1806-1813* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008)

[4] Raoul Bosse, *Esquisse de la statistique générale et particulière du royaume de Westphalie* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1808), indicates 18,450 inhabitants for Kassel in 1808 (p. 79), 29,000 inhabitants for Magdeburg (p. 140), more than 30,000 for Braunschweig (p. 190). Georg Hassel, *Geographisch-statistischer Abriß des Königreichs Westphalen*, (Prague: Diesbach, 1809) indicates 18,772 inhabitants for Kassel in 1807 (p. 191), 25,867 inhabitants for Magdeburg (p. 354) and Braunschweig 30,640 (p. 294). C. I. Bail, *Statistique Générale des provinces composant le royaume de Westphalie*, (Göttingen: Dietrich, 1809), indicates 31,714 for Braunschweig, 30,611 for Magdeburg, and 18,450 for Kassel at the time of the kingdom's creation (p. 197). Bail belonged to the staff surveying the provinces before organizing the kingdom and relied on data provided by provincial and local administrations.

[5] Bosse, *Esquisse de la statistique générale*.

[6] Malchus, *Ueber die Verwaltung der Finanzen des Königreichs Westphalen* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1814), pp. 62-63.

[7] <https://arcinsys.hessen.de/arcinsys/digitalisatViewer.action?detailid=v1473360#>  
Consulted 25 October 2018.

[8] Birgit Hoffmann, "Die gerichtliche Verfolgung von Selbstjustiz und Exzessen bei der Auflösung des Königreichs Westphalen im Gebiet des Herzogtums Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel," *Braunschweigisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte*, 79 (1998), p. 85-124; for the composition of the Duchy of Braunschweig: C. I. Bail, *Statistique Générale des provinces composant*, p. 78.

[9] Bärbel Sunderbrinck, *Revolutionäre Neuordnung auf Zeit. Gelebte Verfassungskultur im Königreich Westphalen: Das Beispiel Minden-Ravensberg 1807-1813* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2015), p. 333.

[10] See, for example: Michael Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde. Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich 1792-1918* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992); Ute Planert, *Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg. Frankreichs Kriege und der deutsche Süden: Alltag - Wahrnehmung - Deutung 1792-1841* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007); Ute Planert, "Resistance to Napoleonic Reform in the Grand Duchy of Berg, the Kingdom of Westphalia and the South German States," in *The Napoleonic Empire and the New European Political Culture*, ed. Michael Broers, Peter Hicks, and Agustín Guimera (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 148-59.

[11] Jaroslaw Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw, 1807-1815. A Napoleonic Outpost in Central Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.10.

[12] See, for example: Sunderbrinck, *Revolutionäre Neuordnung auf Zeit* and the essays in Jacques-Olivier Boudon, Gabriele B. Clemens, and Pierre Horn, eds., *Erbfeinde im Empire? Franzosen und Deutsche im Zeitalter Napoleons* (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2016)

[13] Willy Kohl, *Die Verwaltung der östlichen Departements des Königreichs Westphalen, 1807-1814* (Berlin: Ebering, 1937), p. 41.

[14] Owen Connelly, *Napoleon's Satellite Kingdoms. Managing Conquered Peoples* (New York: Free Press 1966).

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